

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25963

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, MILI

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S PRESS CONFERENCE - EMBASSY

COMMENT ON EUROPEAN DEFENSE, NUCLEAR STRATEGY AND
GERMANY

REF: PARIS 25599

1. SUMMARY. IN THE COURSE OF HIS PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 27, PRESIDENT POMPIDOU (A) REJECTED THE IDEA OF AN INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN DEFENSE IN THE NEAR TERM -- AND THUS SEEMED TO CONTRADICT FONMIN JOBERT'S EARLIER SUGGESTION THAT EUROPEAN DEFENSE BEGINNING TO LOOK AS IF IT SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN CHARACTER, (B) GAVE HIS CLEAREST DESCRIPTION YET OF FRANCE'S STRATEGY OF FLEXIBLE (NUCLEAR) RESPONSE, AND (C) UNDERLINED THAT HE IS NOT OBSESSED WITH THE DANGERS OF FUTURE GERMAN OLICIES AND THAT GOOD FRENCH-GERMAN RELATIONS MUST BE THE CORNERSTONE OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION AND STABILITY. END SUMMARY.

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2. EUROPEAN DEFENSE - POMPIDOU'S REJECTION OF AN INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN DEFENSE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE SEEMS TO CONTRAST WITH FRENCH FONMIN JOBERT'S EXPLICIT POSING OF THE PROBLEM OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE IN THE COURSE OF HIS JUNE 19 SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. AT THAT TIME, JOBERT SAID "EUROPEAN DEFENSE IS BEGINNING TO LOOK MORE AND MORE AS IF IT SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN CHARACTER", AND LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS ASKING HOW EUROPE SHOULD ORGANIZE ITS OWN DEFENSE. ON THE FACT OF IT, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT POMPIDOU HAS DRAWN BACK FROM JOBERT'S INITIATIVE. THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS TO GIVE THIS DEVELOPMENT: (A) JOBERT'S INITIATIVE COULD HAVE BEEN A TRIAL BALLOON THAT PMPIDOU NOW WANTS TO DEFLATE; (B) POMPIDOU MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO REMOVE FROM THE PUBLIC ARENA THE SUBJECT OF EUROPE'S DEFENSE OF EUROPE, AND KEEP ANY FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE SUBJECT IN PRIVATE CHANNELS; (C) IN LIGHT OF PUBLIC SPECULATION THAT POMPIDOU MIGHT SURFACE AN INITIATIVE ON EUROPEAN DEFENSE IN THE COURSE OF HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, POMPIDOU MAY HAVE DECIDED -- PERHAPS FOR THE REASONS GIVEN IN (B) ABOVE -- TO SILENCE THESE RUMORS BY TAKING A CLEAR, NEGATIVE STAND. WE WILL CONTINUE ATTEMPTS TO ASCERTAIN FRENCH OBJECTIVES IN LIGHT OF POMPIDOU'S STATEMENT AND JOBERT'S PREVIOUS LINE.

3. NUCLEAR STRATEGY - POMPIDOU MADE A STRONG PITCH FOR TAKING THE ACTIONS REQUIRED TO KEEP FRANCE'S DETERRENT CREDIBLE, INCLUDING THE CONTINUATION OF FRENCH NULEAR TESTING. HE ALSO MADE CLEARER THAN EVER BEFORE PUBICLY THAT FRENCH NO LONGER RELIES SOLELY ON A DETERRENT STRATEGY BASED ON MASSIVE RETALIATION; IN DEVELOPING TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MORE SURVIVABLE STRATEGIC SYSTEMS (E.G. SSBN'S), FRANCE HAS THE MEANS FOR A FLEXIBLE (NUCLEAR) RESPONSE. THIS SEEMS TO BE IN LINE WITH THE REPORT IN PARIS 25458 (NOTAL).

4. GERMANY - POMPIDOU CLEARLY TRIED TO PUT AN END TO RECURRENT RUMORS THAT HE AND HIS OVERNMENT ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH "THE GERMAN PROBLEM", PARTICULARLY THE FEAR OF GERMAN NEUTRALITY. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SOUNDED A WARING NOTE ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF OSTPOLITIK AND HE REMARKED ON THE ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THOSE WHO HAD HOPED THAT POMPIDOU

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MIGHT USE THIS PRESS CONFERENCE S A LAUNCHING PAD FOR A EUROPEAN INTIATIVE DESIGNED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO TIE THE FRG MORE CLOSELY TO WESTERN EUROPE WERE DISAPPOINTED.

HE HAD NOTHING NEW TO SAY AND NO INITIATIVE TO LAUNCH. REGARDLESS OF POMPIDOU'S REASSURING STATEMENTS ON FRENCH-FRG RELATIONS WE EXPECT THAT THE APPREHENSIONS AND UNCER-TAINTIES THAT HAVE MARKED FRANCE'S PERCEPTION OF FUTURE DEVELOP-

MENT IN FRG POLICIES, WHICH WE DESCRIBED IN PARIS 22562,
WILL CONTINUE.
IRWIN

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